

Wildfire smoke poses special threat to people with asthma

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Smoky haze blankets Salem, Ore.

(HealthDay)—People with asthma and other respiratory illnesses need to be aware of the threat that wildfire smoke poses to their breathing and take steps to protect themselves, an allergy expert warns.

Wildfires are raging across western U.S. states, and the smoke is spreading across much of the country.

It's important for everyone—especially children and people with asthma and other [respiratory illnesses](#)—to stay indoors in order to avoid wildfire smoke, said Dr. J. Allen Meadows, president of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.

"Smoke from fires is a dangerous irritant to the eyes and respiratory system. It can make heart conditions and [lung diseases](#) like asthma worse. Children are especially vulnerable because their lungs are less developed, and they are closer to the ground, and thus more likely to take in more

smoke," Meadows said in a college news release.

If you can smell smoke outdoors, try to stay inside. If you have asthma, control it with proper use of your medications, and consult your allergist if are having difficulty breathing, he advised.

If you have to go outside, an N95 mask, properly worn, will offer some protection from wildfire smoke. Paper or cloth dust masks do not protect your lungs from smoke, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

People near fire areas who may have to leave quickly should keep a supply of asthma medications ready to go. If you must go to a shelter, inform officials about anyone in your family who has asthma.

Even after smoke levels fall, keep alert for any asthma symptoms. Contact your [health care provider](#) if you have trouble breathing, shortness of breath, a cough that won't stop, or other persistent symptoms. For [medical emergencies](#), call 911 or go right away to an [emergency department](#), Meadows said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [wildfire smoke](#)

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